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CIA

The Action Chaplain from Yale

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CPYRGHT By Jim Hoagland
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Presbyterian Minister Is at Forefront Of Civil Rights and Peace Causes To Sighs of Conservative Peers

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Ala.: "We expect him eventually to mellow."

Mr. Coffin's critics on the faculty no longer harbor such hopes. He has consistently staked out positions more radical than his peers, then moved on to new stances when his once controversial views become more widely accepted.

Indeed, there was little in his post-CIA background to give them hopes in the first place. His attack on fraternities at Williams College as "un-Christian" when he was chaplain there in 1958 (two students fired a shotgun blast into his house during that controversy) and his early and militant involvement in civil rights are cases in point.

Now, however, the Minister is riding the crest of a cause that to millions of Americans is not merely technically illegal but also morally repugnant. Conceding that his outspokenness has brought him under fire from Yale alumni, Mr. Coffin said recently that "too many people want a chaplain to be a nice guy, but not a good man."

"How can you be dedicated to educating conscientious young men, and then not stand by them... when they make a moral decision not to participate in an immoral and illegal war?"

"The peace movement is broadening its base. More and more students are deciding to be radical in their commitment, not in their views... We cannot shield them, but we can expose ourselves to the same dangers."

Even If It Means Jail

IN THE MARCH ISSUE of the Yale Alumni magazine, Mr. Coffin dealt with the same subject on a more personal level. But he believes that what

is happening to him is happening to the peace movement generally.

He said that after "writing letters, signing petitions, attending rallies, standing in silent vigils... many times and for years, does [a chaplain] tuck his conscience into bed with the comforting thought, 'Well, I have done my best, the President continues to escalate the war, and the law of the land is clear'?"

"Or does he decide that having chosen the road of protest he has to choose to pursue it to the end, even if this means going to jail?"

Mr. Coffin answered his question on Oct. 20 in front of the Justice Department. Aiding and abetting draft resisters is a felony, with a maximum penalty of \$10,000 fine and five years in jail. He signed a statement that he had "aided and abetted," and would continue to do it.

Mr. Coffin's stand has not caused him problems with Yale's administration. "They understand freedom of speech at Yale," he says.

From the students, who have watched him ride around the campus on a motorscooter with a pipe clenched between his teeth, there is wide admiration of his "bulldozing" manner.

After last weekend's peace demonstrations, he returned to his comfortable yellow house in New Haven, where he spends much time gardening and playing the piano. His wife should be able to give him good pointers on the latter hobby. Her father is Arthur Rubinstein.

Original filed in P. Hoagland

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